



University of Connecticut Health Center  
*The School of Dental Medicine*

Testimony  
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee  
March 5, 2009

Senator Handley, Representative Willis and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, my name is Brian Bell, 4<sup>th</sup> year dental student at the University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine. I am here today to speak in support of **HB 6335 AN ACT CONCERNING THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT HEALTH CENTER FACILITIES PLAN.**

As a 4<sup>th</sup> year dental student, I can offer a unique perspective on the potential benefits that an integrated Academic Health Center can offer the School of Dental Medicine. Consistently recognized as one of the top dental schools in the nation, the School of Dental Medicine has a unique philosophy on dental education. Unlike many other Dental Schools that view dentistry as an entity unto itself, the SODM stresses the concept of dentistry as a specialty within medicine. The first two years of dental education focus heavily on the Basic Medical Sciences. Dental students take the entire BMS course load side by side with the students in the School of Medicine. This provides us with an exceptional opportunity to collaborate with our future medical colleagues. The opportunity to take classes, engage in group discussions, and have case conferences together with the medical students fosters a learning environment unique to a Health Center setting.

During the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years of dental school, the dental students transition to providing oral health care to some of the state's most needy citizens. Personally, I have a patient pool consisting of people from all corners of the state, each with their own unique circumstance and reason for coming to the Health Center. As students, we provide comprehensive oral health care to these patients. We are both taught, and encouraged, to utilize our background in medicine to provide health care services that significantly improve the quality of life of our patients and your fellow citizens. As I alluded to earlier, a significant component of oral health care entails communicating with other medical professionals. On an everyday basis, students in the School of Dental Medicine interact with the physicians of our patients. Medical consults are written daily, often to physicians under the same roof, right at the health center. Being able to communicate directly with physicians in the health center is an opportunity very few other dental students get to experience. If a patient were to need lab results prior to a procedure, we have an in house lab that would be able to facilitate this process. Furthermore, the health center offers a sort of "one stop shopping" for many of the patients. Those with transportation issues will often schedule their medical appointments on days they have a dental visit planned. This is a significant advantage of the current set up and ultimately, results in the patient obtaining an overall higher level of care.

Dental students are required to participate in an emergency rotation during their 4<sup>th</sup> year of dental school. During this time, we provide emergency care to a significant population of Connecticut residents. The fact that the school is associated with a hospital makes this experience far more meaningful. We are able to see a high number of medically complex patients who present with a multitude of diseases, many of whom would not present themselves for care if they did not know we were integrated with the hospital and health center.

My experience as a dental student at the UCONN Health Center has been exceptional. I have had the wonderful opportunity to be immersed in a health care center unlike most other dental schools. This has provided me and my fellow dental students with a level of education that has already benefited the citizens and taxpayers of this state.

With the exception of my 4 years of undergraduate education, I have lived in Connecticut my entire life. Following graduation, I will be participating in post graduate dental education in Hartford, and eventually, will be practicing in the state. Clearly, I have a vested interest in what is best for the overall health of Connecticut. This is why I strongly encourage you to support this proposal and continue to support the UCONN Health Center. With this support the School of Dental Medicine will be able to continue to provide exceptionally well prepared dental professionals to serve the community. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.